DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 214 883 SP 019 820

AUTHOR Sirotnik, Kenneth A.
TITLE Parents and Their Children: A Study of Congruence on Attitudes About School. A Study of Schooling in the United States. Technical Report Series, No. 13.
INSTITUTION California Univ., Los Angeles. Graduate School of Education
SPONS AGENCY Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Dayton, Ohio.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 38p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Busing; *Decision Making; Family Attitudes; Family Characteristics; Institutional Evaluation; *Parent Attitudes; *Parent School Relationship; *Parent Student Relationship; Parent Teacher Cooperation; School Community Relationship; Secondary Education; Secondary School Students; *Social Values; *Student Attitudes

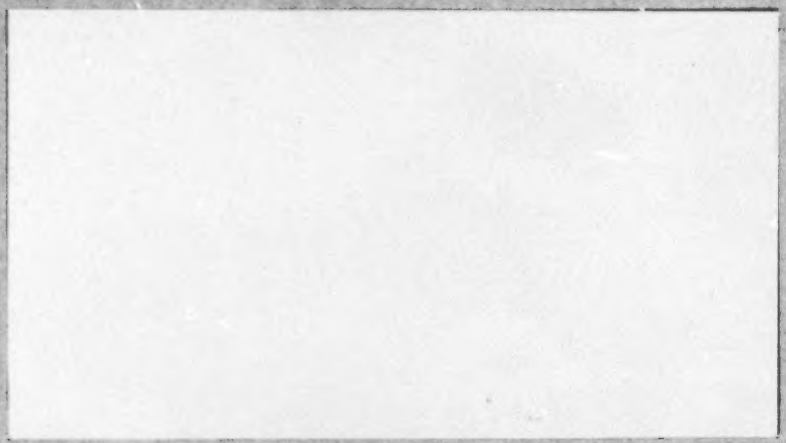
ABSTRACT

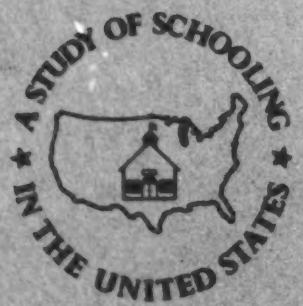
The focus of this study was upon the congruence of responses between parents and their children to items pertaining to functions of schooling, school evaluation, school problems, and other school issues. Paired comparison data is reported for parents and students from 25 secondary schools. The interpretive frame of reference for this study stemmed from a decision making/problem solving model involving parents and students. This approach to education requires a "meeting-of-the-minds" or a common understanding of the attitudinal differences between the participants. From this perspective, being able to predict a child's attitude from the parent's attitude--and vice versa--is less important than determining to what extent they hold the same attitudes. The bulk of data analysis and interpretation in this study was based upon observed percentages of response agreement between parents and their children. An example is presented of parent and student responses to a question designed to measure degree of personal commitment to busing as a means of school desegregation. In analyzing these responses, a discussion is given of how the results were tabulated and of how convergence percentages were determined. It was found that most of the differences between parent and child attitudes occurred on items having strong value components (e.g., job preparation or intellectual curricular functions, personal or social development, racism, desegregation, religion in schools, etc.). Very few differences were obtained on items pertaining more directly to school processes (e.g., school grades and school problems). It is concluded that, in involving parents and their children in decision making about their education, educators would be well advised not to assume that belonging to the same family necessarily means having similar attitudes. Tables of participant responses to the survey questionnaire are included as well as sample questions posed by the researcher. (JD)

ED214883

A STUDY OF SCHOOLING

Technical Report Series





"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
John I. Goodlad
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Distributed by the Laboratory in
School and Community Education

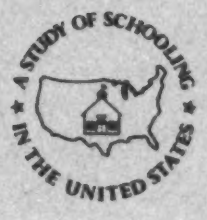
Graduate School of Education
University of California
Los Angeles, California 90024

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

SP 019 220



SUPPORTED BY

The Danforth Foundation
International Paper Company Foundation
The JDR 3rd Fund
Martha Holden Jennings Foundation
Charles F. Kettering Foundation
Lilly Endowment, Inc.
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
National Institute of Education
The Needmor Fund
Pedamorphosis, Inc.
The Rockefeller Foundation
The Spencer Foundation
United States Office of Education

Conducted under the auspices of the Institute for
Development of Educational Activities (/I/D/E/A/)
A Division of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation

John I. Goodlad, Principal Investigator

PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN: A STUDY OF CONGRUENCE ON ATTITUDES ABOUT SCHOOL

Kenneth A. Sirotnik

Technical Report No. 13

1981

A Study of Schooling is based upon the assumption that improving schools requires knowing what is happening in and around them. A comprehensive data-base of contextual information was obtained from students, teachers, administrators, parents and observers at all grade levels in thirty-eight elementary and secondary purposively sampled schools. *It is strongly recommended that readers of any technical report in this series first read Technical Report No. 1 which outlines the details, scope and limitations of the Study as a whole.*

It must be understood that this series of technical reports does not constitute the Study. Some reports are highly specific "molecular" inquiries while others take a more "molar" view across data sources, schooling levels, etc. Some reports are more methodological in nature arising out of issues in data analysis. Many of the reports quite naturally overlap in data analysed and interpretations rendered. Some authors have approached their task as consisting mostly of data description with little discussion beyond the presentation of the data. Others have ventured further into the realm of interpretation and speculation. *It must be further understood that data-based inferences can and do differ among researchers who come at the data from differing points-of-view.* Authors, therefore, are duly acknowledged for each report and are responsible for the material presented therein.

Parents and Their Children: A Study of Congruence on Attitudes About School

Introduction

That parents should have some input into the decision-making process surrounding their children's education has long been an ostensible working assumption of schools and communities, given the prevalence of parent and teacher associations (most commonly called PTA's). That students should have some input into the decision-making process surrounding their own education is a more recent working assumption, reflected in the revision of many PTA's to PTSA's--"S" for student.

Even more recent are the concerted efforts of many schools to really take seriously the inputs of parents and students in decision-making processes. In fact, Federal and State educational funding legislation now almost always requires parent, and frequently student, involvement in the programs being supported. And, of course, this is a key premise of the community school movement--clients (e.g. parents and students) of the school must help make decisions about the school program so that the school can meet the needs of the community (Davies, 1980).

Data collected during A Study of Schooling, some of which are presented in Table 1, certainly attest to the attitudinal disposition on the part of both parents and (although less pronounced) teachers toward more parent and student involvement. Unfortunately, students were not

---

Insert Table 1 about here

---

asked the same type of question regarding influence in decision-making. But on a related item, nearly 80%, of the over 12,000 secondary students responding, agreed with the statement "Students should have a say in what is taught at this school."

Thus, schools have to become, and are becoming, increasingly responsive to the input of parents and students. But it would seem that involving parents and their children in a viable problem-solving/decision-making process will invariably lead to a confrontation of attitudes and, perhaps, the need for attitude changes. It becomes interesting, then, in this context, to wonder about the nature of shared and unshared attitudes vis a vis issues directly pertaining to the school.

Specifically, this study will focus on the congruency of response between parents and their children to items pertaining to functions of schooling, school evaluation, school problems, and a broad array of other miscellaneous schooling issues. Attitude congruency will be explored in several different ways (to be described below) while controlling for these, potentially important, moderator variables: level of schooling (senior high, junior high and upper elementary schools); community type (urban, suburban and rural); parent characteristics including their age, income, race/ethnicity, education, political attitude, and how informed they perceive themselves as being as to what goes on in their child's school; and, finally, the sex similarity or dissimilarity of the parent-child pairs.

Literature Perspective

Purusing the last 10 years of the Education Index plus selected other sources (and spin-offs of these sources) has revealed that surprisingly

little research has been conducted where data have been collected on parent-child pairs regarding issues directly pertaining to the school.

Most of the studies uncovered by our review occurred in the forties and fifties and largly pertained to parent-child attitude congruence on general social issues. (See, for example, Remmers and Weltman, 1947.) The focus of many of these studies was determining the extent of family influence on the political, economic and social attitudes of their offspring. (Hyman, 1959, reviewed most of the research at that time concerning the socialization of political attitudes; see also the later review by Hess and Torney, 1965.)

The more recent studies we found seemed to be less concerned with the socialization of attitudes as such, and simply concerned with identifying "generational gaps" in general attitudes and value structures. Examples of these kind of studies are as follows: Perrone, 1965 and 1967; Weinstock and Lerner, 1972; Orloff and Weinstock, 1975; Wijting, Arnold and Conrad, 1978; Zey-Ferrell, et.al., 1978. Several studies were also found with a more psychological focus, looking at the similarity of emotionally disturbed adolescents and their parents (e.g. Mlott, 1972 and Tucker, 1976).

In sum, it would appear that no study to date has collected extensive paired comparision data for parents and students covering issues specifically relevant to educational practices at their schools.

Population and Sample Characteristics

The data to be reported in this study are part of the larger body of data collected in A Study of Schooling.[1] The 38 schools (13 high schools, 12 junior high or middle schools and 13 elementary schools) were purposively

sampled to represent stratification factors such as school size, race/ethnicity of students, community economic status and community location (i.e. rural, urban or suburban). Schools were also selected from most of the major geographic regions of the U.S.

The parent survey portion of the study was conducted by population mailing, i.e., every family represented at each school was mailed a parent questionnaire, resulting in average return rates of 36% and 30% for elementary and secondary parents (families) respectively. Students were sampled by sampling classrooms either in each content area at secondary schools or grade level at elementary schools. This procedure resulted in fairly representative samples averaging 62% of all the students at secondary schools and 51% of all the students at elementary schools.

Table 2 presents the actual sample size figures for secondary and elementary schools along with the number of serendipitous match-ups of parents and their children which occurred in this sampling process.

Insert Table 2 about here

A word of caution is in order here. Clearly, 4621 is a large sample size, particularly for a study of this nature (i.e. parent-child matched pairs). However, large numbers of data do not necessarily guarantee wide generalizability for the data. The student samples are quite representative of their school populations. The parent samples are, of course, self-selected given the sampling process. Thus, the issue of representativeness for the parent-child pairs reduces down to one for the parents themselves. At best, the target population, for purposes of generalization from the data of this study, can be envisioned as consisting of families in communities such as those in the Study of Schooling and the parents in these families

who respond to school research surveys. As might be expected, and as our data seem to indicate, this target population tends to under-represent minority families and those families in lower income brackets.

Kinds of Data Collected

Embedded in the larger parent and secondary student questionnaires were several dozen items either worded identically or in parallel forms. Most of these items are included in the present analysis and fall into three general categories: (a) curricular functions of schooling and overall school evaluation (b) school problems and (c) general school issues. With the exception of several items in the last category, questions were worded so as to apply to the specific school. The actual items (as worded for parents) are reproduced in Appendix A along with code numbers for reference in the tables to follow.

Only a dozen or fewer items were answered in common by parents and their children in upper or early elementary schools. Since (a) these items were in slightly different form from those in the secondary student survey and (b) the results for elementary parent-child analyses were quite similar to those for the secondary analyses, only the secondary analyses of parent and child responses will be presented here.

Congruency Indices

In just the small body of literature reviewed above, several distinctly different analytical methods seemed to be used (about equally often) for assessing attitudinal congruency: (a) Pearson product-moment correlation (b) paired-comparison of means and (c) comparison of independent group means. Not only can these methods lead to non-convergent interpretations but method (b) is not necessarily sensitive to congruency since the algebraic sign of differences confounds the comparison; and method (c) is clearly inappropriate

given the dependent nature of paired data.

In this investigation, we are dealing with items with limited response ranges (e.g., 4-point Likert scales). In this case, two quite different congruency indices can be used, depending upon one's interpretive frame of reference: absolute and/or relative measures of response agreement. The former index refers to the simple observed percentage of agreement between the pair of respondents (e.g., parent and child). The latter index refers to one which is based upon the discrepency between observed congruency and what would have been expected by chance alone. Cohen (1968) has shown that the Pearson correlation coefficient approximates this latter index quite well.

Elsewhere (Sirotnik, 1980), the interpretive differences between these two approaches have been discussed at length. Briefly, the simple observed percentage of congruency is just that--a measure of the amount of agreement, regardless of whether it is due to something associated with the parent-child pair or due merely to response tendencies in the parent and child samples. The correlation coefficient, as a relative index, measures the extent to which the pair of responses in some way depend upon one another, e.g., generational transmission of values from parent to child.

As noted above, the interpretive frame of reference for this study stems from a decision-making/problem-solving model involving parents and students in their own education. This "community-school" approach to education requires a "meeting-of-the-minds" or, at least, a common understanding of the attitudinal differences among the critical participants. From this perspective, being able to predict the child's attitude from the parent's attitude--and vice-versa--is less important than determining to what extent they hold the same attitudes. Thus, although correlations are

computed and briefly described, the bulk of data analysis and interpretation to follow is based upon observed percentages of congruency (or response agreement) between parents and their children.

By way of example, consider the parent and student responses to the school issues item 5 designed to measure the degree of personal commitment to busing as a means of school desegregation. Table 3 presents

- - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Insert Table 3 about here

- - - - - - - - - - - - - -

the most complete description possible of the responses to this item by parents and their children. This is a typical crosstabulation analysis, families being the units of replication and parent and child attitudes being the variables crosstabulated. Note that the overall chi-square, although large and significant, talls us not about congruency but about the pattern of incongruency, viz., the tendency for children of "agreeing" parents to be more evenly spread out in their own attitudes along the agree to disagree response continuum versus the tendency for the common concentration of both "disagreeing" parents and children. Adding up the percentages (c) in the main diagonal cell, we see that nearly 47% of the parents and their children selected identical response positions--this is the observed congruency index. The r of .23 tells us that this observed percentage is not very different from that predicted by the marginal information alone (see expected cell percentages d in Table 3). In effect, both students and (even more so) parents primarily disagree with this item. This can be seen by comparing the separate parent and child marginal distributions ("totals" columns) and, for statistical convienence, computing the mean for each distribution--1.61 and 1.91 for parents and students respectively.

Results

From the discussion in the previous section, it should be clear that, for our purposes here, most of the interesting data in a crosstabulation such as that presented in Table 3 can be captured in the percentage of observed congruency and the mean parent and student responses. These data are presented in Table 4 for each item included in this study as computed across all parent-child pairs in the secondary sample.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Insert Table 4 about here

- - - - - - - - - - - - - -

At a fairly gross level, the general impression is not one of very high nor very low parent and child congruency. The overall (average) congruency rate is approximately 43%, ranging from a low of 29% (Issues Item 3) to a high of 68% (Intellectual Function: Your View). These are, of course, fairly stringent tests of congruency. It might be argued, for example, that agreeing "strongly" or "mildly" is, nevertheless, agreeing; and, therefore, collapsing the parent and child data into "agreement" and "disagreement" categories would result in a reasonable and less conservative test of congruency. For example, following this procedure with the data in Table 3, an additional 22% of the parent-child responses are congruent resulting in a total observed congruency percentage of nearly 70%. For the least congruent item (Issue #3), this procedure increases the observed congruency to 54%; for the most congruent item (Intellectual Function: Your View), the observed congruency increases to 95%. In general, this more liberal treatment of the congruency question would increase most of the percentages reported here by 20 to 25 percent. Which treatment of the data makes the most sense? Clearly, the answer depends upon, for example, the behavioral

implications of peoples' agreement or disagreement when expressed "mildly" or "strongly." Since this is an unknown, as far as our data are concerned, we will follow the more conservative treatment of the data by computing exact congruency measures.

Returning to the trends in Table 4, the highest parent-child congruency percentages occur in their personal views on the importance of the four functions of schooling. With the exception of the intellectual function, less congruency is evidenced when parents and students are asked for their perceptions of what the school thinks is important. Moreover, parents tend to place more importance on the functions than do their children when responding from their own point-of-view; quite the opposite occurs when parents and students respond from the school's point-of-view. (These trends are evident upon inspection of parent-student means and mean differences.)

We also asked parents and students to select the single most important schooling function, again, from their own point-of-view as well as from the school's point-of-view. In this case, both response perspectives produced nearly the same congruency result, i.e., 49% when parents and their children responded from the school's perspective and 46% when they responded from their own perspective.

Only 39% of the parents and children are congruent on their grading of the school. Yet, this item has by far the highest relative congruency index, i.e., the correlation between parent and child responses is .35. In large part, this is due to the increased response scale range of five possible score values. Note also that combining the A and B categories, leaving the C category as is, and combining the D and F categories into what are essentially "good," "average," and "poor" ratings respectively, the congruence percentage increases to 56%.

The school problems on which at least 50% of the parent-child pairs are congruent are "student misbehavior," "predjudice/racial conflict," and "the administration." The question of discipline is most interesting in these problem areas, especially in light of Gallup's consistent finding that, among adults, this is the problem of most concern. In our sample, we find both students and parents seeing "student misbehavior" as a minor problem with 50% of the parent-child pairs responding identically. Yet, only 40% of the pairs are congruent on the problem area "teachers don't discipline students." Moreover, it is parents who see the lack of teacher discipline as a problem (minor) whereas students hardly see this as a problem area at all.

Not much parent-child congruency exists in regard to the assortment of items pertaining to various school issues. The most congruency occurs for items 7, 8 and 9 all having to do with educational equality, either for the sexes or the races. The least congruency occurs, not surprisingly, in those items with the biggest parent and student mean differences. The results for items 3, 4 and 6, all having to do with desegregation, indicate that children are considerably more favorably disposed toward the issues than their parents. Students were also much more receptive to the provision of smoking areas in high schools than were their parents. The only item where parents were much more favorable in their response than their children was that pertaining to allowing prayers in school. Interestingly, all these items which generate the most parent-student incongruency are among the most value-laiden and least school-specific variables in the study. Perhaps the often elusive "generation gap" is still alive and well, at least for the respondents in our sample.

So far, we have been looking at overall trends. Do the varying degrees of agreement noted above for each question change, depending upon other control variables such as the level of schooling, the race/ethnicity of the respondents, and so on? For example, given that nearly 40% of the parents and children grade their school identically, do the almost 45% who differ by one grade point, and, even more interestingly, the over 15% who differ by two or more grade points, tend to come from urban communities?--more wealthy families?--etc. The simplest and most straight forward way to investigate such questions is to recompute the statistics in Table 4 separately for each category of the control (or moderator) variables noted earlier in this report. (Distributions and category boundaries for the nine control variables used in this study are contained in Appendix B.) These computations have been done for the observed percentages of parent-child congruency and they are presented in Tables 5-7.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Insert Tables 5-7 about here

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

But, before exploring the trends in these data, we should note several technical considerations. Certainly, more "sophisticated" analyses than those which follow can be (and have been) performed, e.g., multivariate factorial analyses of variance, acknowledging the possibilities of interactions among the control variables and inter-relationships among the response variables. First, a representative sampling of factorial anovas reveal hardly any interactions of a magnitude worth describing; and most of the significant findings reside in the main effects. Second, we know which variables tend to be highly intercorrelated and can interpret univariate analyses accordingly. Third, our interest in exploring general trends of parent-child congruency over a potpourri of school issues does not call for

the complexity of multivariate techniques aimed at precise estimates of the significance and contribution of each residualized response variable. In fact, given our purposive sampling design, we have used tests of statistical significance only as heuristic indicators (Popham and Sirotnik, 1967, pp. 248-249). Moreover, even with conservative statistical tests, relationships of a magnitude substantively worth considering are invariably "significant" given the amount of data being analysed.[2]

With these points in mind, the data in Tables 5-7 are arrayed such that only those congruency percentages differing by at least 7% are presented and those differing by 10% or more are ellipsed. In other words, results differing by 6% or less are omitted and generally differ by no more than 3% from the overall congruency percentages presented again at the bottom of each table. For example, although the results for the school grading item for each of the three race/ethnicity groups in Table 5 are omitted, they are all to within three percentage points of the overall congruency rate of 39%.

In spite of the large numbers of significant results (well beyond what would be expected by chance alone for this number of tests), these tables leave the general impression of little difference between control variable categories. In Tables 5-7, only 27% of the possible 342 sets of means are tabled, and only 11% contain differences of at least ten percentage points.

Nevertheless, the trends that do exist are worth noting. Attending to the sets of results enclosed in ellipses, certain control variables (rows) and certain response variables (columns) stand out as being associated with the larger differences between congruency percentages. The two "vocational functions" items in Table 5, the "predjudice/racial conflict" problem area

(#3) in Table 6, the "willingness to be (or have one's child) bused for desegregation" item (#5) in Table 7, and the "high school job experience" item (#13) also in Table 7 are the most productive in terms of control variable differences. Not coincidentally, these differences occur most frequently for the race/ethnicity and parent educational attainment control variables, with the family income and school location control variables not far behind. In view of the high empirical association of these variables (especially race/ethnicity, educational attainment and income), we are probably seeing a general effect of socio-economic status being reflected in these data.[3] In fact, with only one exception, these socio-economic status indicators are generally the most productive in terms of differences on response variables. The exception is the control variable separating out the sexes of the parent and child respondents, which evidences differences not only on the above mentioned items, but on several other interesting items as well.

Space does not permit a detailing of every difference noted in these tables, nor is such action warranted considering the relatively small magnitude of these differences. Proceeding with only the more salient of these results noted in the above paragraph, most of the differences occur on items having strong value components to them (e.g., job preparation vs. intellectual, personal or social development; racism; desegregation; religion in school; etc.). Very few differences were obtained on items pertaining more directly to school processes (e.g., school grade and school problems items). Moreover, most of these response variable differences are accounted for by either socio-economic status indicators or by the sexes of the parent-child pairs. Generally, higher economic status pairs are less congruent than lower economic status pairs on the functions of schooling items (especially vocational preparation). This same finding is echoed in issues item #13

pertaining to the role of vocational preparation in high school. The reverse is true when it comes to value questions, particularly those having to do with desegregation.

Quite independent of these findings are those for the various combinations of parent and child gender. Of all combinations, mothers and their daughters tend to be closest in agreement, i.e., they tend to have the highest congruency percentages. Mixed results obtain for the remaining groups, although there is a tendency for the mother-son combination to be least attitudinally congruent.

It is also interesting to note those control variables which seem to account for little or no differences in attitude congruency. Level of schooling seems to be one of these variables, evidencing only a slight tendency for higher congruency between parents and children at the senior high level. The age and political orientation of the parents are also of minor or no importance, with one exception for the latter control variable: the fairly controversial issue pertaining to a personal committment to busing as a means for desegregation (#5, Table 7) finds "conservative" parents most congruent with their children and "liberal" parents and their children least congruent. Finally, although the control variable "parent knowledge of school" shows few large differences, a number of small differences exist which uniformly evidence this surprising trend: more parent-child attitude congruence occurs for those parents who perceive themselves as knowing less about what goes on at their school.

Thus far, the discussion of findings has been restricted to attitude congruence per se. In those cases where differences occur, we have not taken the next step and asked how parents and students differ in their response and how "favorable" or "unfavorable" are their responses on the attitude

continuum. To do so, requires the presentation of the parent and child mean responses associated with each congruency percentage in Tables 5-7.

To avoid this overwhelming mass of data, we will only present these results for the several more salient control and response variables noted above. For example, in Table 8 the items dealing with vocational education

- - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Insert Table 8 about here

- - - - - - - - - - - - - -

receive higher endorsements by non-whites; but the parent-student mean differences are not that great nor do they vary much between the three ethnicity groups. In contrast, the results for schooling Issue #5 reveal large differences between ethnicity groups. White parents and their children are least willing to make a personal commitment to busing for desegregation, as are the Mexican-American parents. Yet, the Mexican-American children and black parents and children are the most willing respondents. In effect, the brown parent and child samples are greatly different on the average (by 7/10 of a scale point); and although not as large, a substantial difference exists between the white parent and child samples.

These results are an excellent example of how studying attitude congruency is not necessarily the same as studying average, attitudinal responses. In Table 7, we noted that whites were the most attitudinally congruent pairs. In large part, this is due to their extreme responding, even given the average difference between parents and students. Barely a third of the black parent-child pairs are congruent, yet they are nearly identical in their responses on the average. They also respond near the middle of the scale. For these reasons, black parent and child responses will be more highly correlated than those of the other groups. (In fact,

the white, black and brown parent-child correlations on this item are .14, .22 and .03 respectively.)

Conclusion

These, and other selected findings can be treated in more expanded analytical form. For example, analyses of variance depicting the interactions between the parent-child pair and control variable factors would be most illuminating. Indeed, such analyses are being conducted, but in the context of the particular substance of the variables rather than to assess, per se, parent-child congruence.

Regarding the latter issue, it seems fairly safe to conclude that parents and their children are not highly congruent in their attitudes on an assortment of issues pertaining to their schools. The few cases of higher congruency are largely a function of more extreme attitudes on the part of both parents and students. Certainly, there are significant interactions between control variables and parent-child congruency for certain items. These can be important differences to consider, depending upon the particular context of the school and community. In general, however, parents and their children tend to respond more like independent groups, which they are not, than like the matched pairs, which they are. (The parent-child correlations are all relatively low.) Thus, although the role of the family as a socializing agent is certainly evident, it is not evidenced very strongly, at least not in terms of the sample used and kinds of data collected in this study.

In some of the other work currently in progress for A Study of Schooling, teacher responses to these same items have been compared, on the average, to those of parents and students. The results are mixed, although

it is generally the case that teacher and parent average perceptions are closer on the more value laiden items whereas those for teachers and students are closer on those items pertaining more directly to issues and problems specific to the school.

It would seem, therefore, that given the recognized legitimacy of involving parents and children in their own educative process, educators may well be advised not to assume that belonging to the same family necessarily means having similar attitudes. The so-called "generation gap" probably exists, but it may operate quite differently for different issues and different family types. Finding out where all people "are at" may be a necessary process not only from the standpoint of good community organization theory, but also from the standpoint of sound decision-making practice based upon empirical data.

Footnotes

1. More information on the background and activities of A Study of Schooling can be found in the series of four articles published in the Phi Delta Kappan: Goodlad, Sirotnik and Overman (1979); Klein, Tye and Wright (1979); Benham, Giesen and Oakes (1980); and Bentzen, Williams and Heckman (1980).

2. When analysing our data using conservative post hoc statistical procedures (e.g., Tukey's, "honestly significant differences" test), we find that differences in observed congruency percentages of 7% and 10% are generally significant beyond the .01 and .001 levels respectively.

3. The three pair-wise crosstabulations between these control variables were all highly significant with contingency coefficients close to .5.

References

Benham, B.J., Giesen, P. and Oakes, J. A Study of Schooling: Students experiences in schools. Phi Delta Kappan, 1980, 61, 337-340.

Bentzen, M.M., Williams, R.C. and Heckman, P. A Study of Schooling: Adult experiences in schools. Phi Delta Kappan, 1980, 61, 394-397.

Davies, D. (Ed.) Communities and Their Schools. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980.

Goodlad, J.I., Sirotnik, K.A. and Overman, B.C. An Overview of A Study of Schooling, Phi Delta Kappan, 1979, 61, 194-178.

Hess, R.D. and Torney, J.V. The development of basic attitudes and values toward government and citizenship during the elementary school years. Cooperative Research Project No. 1078, Office of Education, HEW. The University of Chicago, 1965.

Hyman, H.H. Political Socialization. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1959.

Klein, M.F., Tye, K.A. and Wright, J.E. A Study of Schooling: Curriculum. Phi Delta Kappan, 1979, 61, 244-248.

Mlott, S.R. Some significant relationships between adolescents and their parents as revealed by the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. Adolescence, 1972, 7, 169-182.

Orloff, H. and Weinstock, A. A comparison of parent and adolescent attitude factor structures. Adolescence, 1975, 10, 201-205.

Perrone, P.A. Values and occupational preferences of junior high school girls. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1965, 44, 253-257.

Perrone, P.A. Stability of values of junior high school pupils and their parents over two years. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1967, 46, 268-274.

Popham, W.J. and Sirotnik, K.A. Educational Statistics: Use and Interpretation. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.

Remmers, H.H. and Weltman, N. Attitude inter-relationships of youth, their parents, and their teachers. The Journal of Social Psychology, 1947, 26, 61-68.

Sirotnik, K.A. Assessing attitudinal congruency: A case for absolute (as well as probabilistic) indices. A Study of Schooling, Technical Report No. 12, 1980.

Tucker, L.S. A comparison of the value preferences of emotionally disturbed adolescents and their parents with normal adolescents and their parents. Adolescence, 1976, 11, 549-567.

Weinstock, A. and Lerner, R.M. Attitudes of late adolescents and their parents toward contemporary issues. Psychological Reports, 1972, 30, 239-244.

Wijting, J.P., Arnold, C.R. and Conrad, K.A. Generational differences in work values between parents and children and between boys and girls across grade levels 6, 9, 10 and 12. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 1978, 12, 245-260.

Zey-Ferrell, M., Tolone, W.L. and Walsh, R.H. The intergenerational socialization of sex-role attitudes: a gender or generation gap? Adolescence, 1978, 13, 95-108.

TABLE 1

Parent and Teacher Perceptions of
How Much Influence Parents and Students Now Have
and Should Have in the Decision-Making
Processes at Their Schools

(Table entries are percentages of parents or teachers responding "a lot", "some", or "no" influence.)

	How Much Influence They...					
	Now Have			Should Have		
Data Source	A Lot	Some	No	A Lot	Some	No
Parent Perceptions Re:[a]						
Parents	12.9	59.2	27.8	43.4	53.8	2.7
Students	10.4	53.2	36.4	26.0	66.3	7.7
Teacher Perceptions Re:[b]						
Parents	6.4	75.8	17.8	16.9	79.8	3.3
Students	3.0	61.7	35.3	11.4	80.4	8.2

a. Based upon approximately 7800 parent responses

b. Based upon approximately 1300 teacher responses

TABLE 2

Numbers of Parents, Students
and Parent-Child Pairs
Sampled

Schooling Level	Parents	Students	Parent-Student Pairs[b]
Elementary[a]			
Early	901	1800	715
Upper	823	1644	593
	1724	3444	1308
Secondary			
Junior High/Middle	2688	6042	1962
Senior High	4212	7677	2659
	6900	13719	4621

a Early elementary = grades 1 - 3

Upper elementary = grades 4 - 6

b In the event that two or more siblings ended up in the student sample and a parent responded for their family, the parent data was replicated for each sibling resulting in more than one match-up. About one-third of the elementary and less than 5% of the secondary matched pairs are of this nature.

TABLE 3

Crosstabulation of Parent and Child Attitudinal Responses on School Issues Item 5

Parent Response	Child Response: Strongly Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Strongly Agree	Totals
Strongly Disagree	1631[a]	517	442	254	2844
	57.3[b]	18.2	15.5	8.9	100.0
	38.9[c]	12.3	10.6	6.1	67.9
	(34.4)[d]	(13.6)	(11.9)	(8.0)	
Mildly Disagree	221	121	103	54	499
	44.3	24.2	20.6	10.8	100.0
	5.3	2.9	2.5	1.3	11.9
	(6.0)	(2.4)	(2.1)	(1.4)	
Mildly Agree	173	125	105	79	482
	35.9	25.9	21.8	16.4	100.0
	4.1	3.0	2.5	1.9	11.5
	(5.8)	(2.3)	(2.0)	(1.4)	
Strongly Agree	95	79	83	106	363
	26.2	21.8	22.9	29.2	100.0
	2.3	1.9	2.0	2.5	8.7
	(4.4)	(1.7)	(1.5)	(1.0)	
Totals	2120	842	733	493	4188
	50.6	20.1	17.5	11.8	100.0

$\chi^2 = 253.4$ $(p < .001)$

$r = 0.23$ $(p < .001)$

Observed Congruency = 46.8%

a cell frequencies
b percentages of row totals
c percentages of table total
d expected cell percentages (of table total)

TABLE 4

Overall Observed Congruency Percentages and
Parent and Student Means and Correlations for All Response Variables

Response Variable	Number of Pairs	Observed Congruency Percentage	Product-Moment Correlation	Separate Means		P-S Mean Difference
				Parents	Student	
Function Importance: Schools' View [a]						
Social	4029	43	.12	3.1	3.2	-0.1
Intellectual	4007	53	.12	3.4	3.6	-0.2
Personal	3969	39	.15	3.1	3.2	-0.1
Vocational	3999	38	.11	3.1	3.3	-0.2
Function Importance: Your View [a]						
Social	3831	52	.02	3.6	3.5	0.1
Intellectual	3841	68	.02	3.9	3.7	0.2
Personal	3808	59	.01	3.8	3.6	0.2
Vocational	3829	62	.03	3.7	3.7	0.0
School Grade [b]	4117	39	.35	3.6	3.5	0.1
School Problems [c]						
1	3982	50	.20	2.2	2.2	0.0
2	3862	46	.18	1.7	1.7	0.0
3	3927	56	.24	1.5	1.5	0.0
4	3900	47	.20	2.1	2.0	0.1
5	3948	46	.23	1.8	1.7	0.1
6	3933	45	.21	1.7	1.7	0.0
7	3927	40	.12	1.9	1.6	0.3
8	3894	44	.19	1.7	1.8	-0.1
9	3878	50	.18	1.5	1.5	0.0
School Issues [d]						
1	4276	40	.18	3.1	3.0	0.1
2	4299	41	.14	3.2	3.3	-0.1
3	4165	29	.12	2.4	3.1	-0.7
4	4170	39	.21	1.5	2.2	-0.7
5	4188	47	.23	1.6	1.9	-0.3
6	4129	31	.08	2.6	3.1	-0.5
7	4177	48	.11	1.4	1.6	-0.2
8	4125	52	.08	1.4	1.6	-0.2
9	4228	48	.14	3.4	3.3	0.1
10	4191	32	.14	2.7	2.8	-0.1
11	4201	32	.13	2.6	2.4	0.2
12	4194	32	.17	2.7	2.5	0.2
13	4294	47	.08	3.5	3.4	0.1
14	4076	31	.10	2.0	2.3	-0.3
15	4229	42	.15	1.8	1.8	0.0
16	4196	33	.21	1.8	2.6	-0.8
17	4282	35	.21	3.4	2.7	0.7
18	4181	32	.15	2.4	2.1	0.3
19	4158	34	.21	2.7	2.8	-0.1
20	4196	40	.17	1.9	1.8	0.1

a 4-point scale (4=very important; 3=somewhat important; 2=somewhat unimportant; 1=very unimportant)
b 5-point scale (A=5; B=4; C=3; D=2; F=1)
c 3-point scale (3=major problem; 2=minor problem; 1=no problem)
d 4-point agreement scale (4=strongly agree; 3=mildly agree; 2=mildly disagree; 1=strongly disagree)

TABLE 5

Parent-Student Observed Congruency Percentages on Functions of Schooling and School Evaluation Items

Control Variable	Importance: School's View				Importance: Your View				School Grade
	Soc.	Int.	Per.	Voc.	Soc.	Int.	Per.	Voc.	
Schooling Level									
Senior High				41	55		62	66	
Junior High				34	49		55	57	
School Location									
Urban		59	45	43	56	76			
Suburban		50	36	34	49	66			
Rural		51	38	42	55	62			
Yearly Family Income									
Less than $10,000			46	50	59			74	
$10,000 to $19,999			37	34	52			62	
$20,000 or more			37	35	50			59	
Race/Ethnicity									
White	42	50	37	35	51	67		60	
Black	47	65	44	46	55	77		70	
Brown	50	61	49	58	63	68		78	
Parent Age									
Less than 40				37					
40 to 49				36					
50 or more				45					
Parent Educational Attainment									
No High School Diploma	47	57	44	50		65	57	72	37
High School Graduate	44	50	40	37		66	55	67	38
Some College	38	51	35	34		72	60	59	40
College Graduate	45	55	36	32		72	64	51	43
Parent Political Orientation									
Conservative					49				
Moderate					54				
Liberal					56				
Parent Knowledge of School									
A great deal		47				65			
A moderate amount		55				69			
Very little		57				72			
Same/Different Sex Parent-Child Pairs									
Mother-son				37	48	64	52	60	37
Father-daughter				30	50	68	60	56	40
Mother-daughter				41	57	72	64	67	43
Father-son				36	49	68	60	59	36
OVERALL	43	53	39	38	52	68	59	62	39

TABLE 6

Parent-Student Observed Congruency Percentages on School Problems 1-9

Control Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Schooling Level									
Senior High									46
Junior High									54
School Location									
Urban			48						50
Suburban			62						51
Rural			50						43
Yearly Family Income									
Less than $10,000			49						
$10,000 to $19,999			57						
$20,000 or more			58						
Race/Ethnicity									
White			59	48		47		44	
Black			46	44		38		39	
Brown			49	38		46		49	
Parent Age									
Less than 40									
40 to 49									
50 or more									
Parent Educational Attainment									
No High School Diploma		42	50	43					
High School Graduate		45	55	47					
Some College		47	57	46					
College Graduate		49	61	50					
Parent Political Orientation									
Conservative									
Moderate									
Liberal									
Parent Knowledge of School									
A great deal		44							47
A moderate amount		45							50
Very little		51							50
Same/Different Sex Parent-Child Pairs									
Mother-son									
Father-daughter									
Mother-daughter									
Father-son									
OVERALL	50	46	56	47	46	45	40	44	50

TABLE 7

Parent-Student Observed Congruency Percentages on Schooling Issues 1-10

Control Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Schooling Level										
Senior High				42	50					
Junior High				34	42					
School Location										
Urban			33	34	36	35			43	
Suburban			26	45	54	28			53	
Rural			27	31	39	30			44	
Yearly Family Income										
Less than $10,000	43	45		32	37					
$10,000 to $19,999	36	37		40	49					
$20,000 or more	39	40		41	49					
Race/Ethnicity										
White		39	27	43	52	29			51	
Black		43	41	31	34	42			35	
Brown		49	25	23	26	29			49	
Parent Age										
Less than 40		40								
40 to 49		39								
50 or more		46								
Parent Educational Attainment										
No High School Diploma		46	27		43					
High School Graduate		41	27		52					
Some College		36	27		44					
College Graduate		39	34		47					
Parent Political Orientation										
Conservative			27	44	51				51	
Moderate			28	37	46				48	
Liberal			34	35	41				44	
Parent Knowledge of School										
A great deal		37					44	48	43	
A moderate amount		42					49	53	50	
Very little		44					52	56	48	
Same/Different Sex Parent-Child Pairs										
Mother-son					49	29	43	48	44	
Father-daughter					41	27	52	55	54	
Mother-daughter					48	34	53	57	51	
Father-son					45	27	46	50	47	
OVERALL	40	41	29	39	47	31	48	52	48	32

TABLE 7 (continued)

Parent-Student Observed Congruency Percentages on Schooling Issues 11-20

Control Variable	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Schooling Level										
Senior High					46					
Junior High					38					
School Location										
Urban			49				35	36		
Suburban			45				32	30		
Rural			52				42	28		
Yearly Family Income										
Less than $10,000			55							
$10,000 to $19,999			46							
$20,000 or more			45							
Race/Ethnicity										
White			45							
Black			56							
Brown			52							
Parent Age										
Less than 40										
40 to 49										
50 or more										
Parent Educational Attainment										
No High School Diploma			51						37	
High School Graduate			50						35	
Some College			47						30	
College Graduate			41						34	
Parent Political Orientation										
Conservative										
Moderate										
Liberal										
Parent Knowledge of School										
A great deal										
A moderate amount										
Very little										
Same/Different Sex Parent-Child Pairs										
Mother-son			46	28			33	31		36
Father-daughter			47	35			39	33		39
Mother-daughter			52	32			36	34		45
Father-son			41	31			32	27		40
OVERALL	32	32	47	31	42	33	35	32	34	40

Table 8

Parent and Student Mean Item Scores
For Selected Control and Response Variables

Control Variables	Vacation Function Importance: Schools View P	S	Diff	Vacation Function Importance: Your View P	S	Diff	School Problem: Prejudice/Racial Conflict P	S	Diff	Schooling Issue #5 P	S	Diff	Schooling Issue #13 P	S	Diff
Race/Ethnicity															
White	3.0	3.2	-0.2	3.7	3.7	0.0	1.4	1.5	-0.1	1.4	1.7	-0.3	3.4	3.4	0.0
Black	3.3	3.5	-0.2	3.8	3.7	0.1	1.6	1.6	0.0	2.5	2.4	0.1	3.7	3.5	0.2
Brown	3.6	3.6	0.0	3.9	3.8	0.1	1.6	1.5	0.1	1.9	2.6	-0.7	3.7	3.5	0.2
Educational Attainment															
No High School Diploma	3.4	3.4	0.0	3.8	3.7	0.1	1.6	1.6	0.0	1.6	2.1	-0.4	3.7	3.4	0.3
High School Graduate	3.1	3.3	-0.2	3.8	3.7	0.1	1.5	1.5	0.0	1.5	1.8	-0.3	3.6	3.4	0.2
Some College	3.0	3.2	-0.2	3.6	3.6	0.0	1.4	1.5	-0.1	1.6	1.9	-0.4	3.5	3.4	0.1
College Graduate	2.9	3.1	-0.2	3.4	3.7	-0.3	1.5	1.5	0.0	1.8	1.8	0.0	3.1	3.3	-0.2
Same/Different Sex Parent-Child Pairs															
Mother-Son	3.0	3.2	-0.2	3.5	3.7	-0.2	1.4	1.5	-0.1	1.6	1.8	-0.2	3.3	3.3	0.0
Father-Daughter	3.2	3.3	-0.1	3.6	3.7	-0.1	1.5	1.5	0.0	1.6	1.9	-0.3	3.5	3.4	0.1
Mother-Daughter	3.0	3.2	-0.2	3.5	3.6	-0.1	1.4	1.5	-0.1	1.6	2.1	-0.5	3.4	3.5	-0.1
Father-Son	3.1	3.2	-0.1	3.7	3.7	-0.0	1.5	1.6	-0.1	1.5	1.8	-0.3	3.5	3.3	-0.2

APPENDIX A

Parent-Student Response Variables

Functions of Schooling: School's View

Schools usually provide education in a variety of areas. However, some areas may be more important at one school than another. As far as you can tell, how important does THIS SCHOOL think each of the following areas is for the education of students at this school?

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Unimportant	Very Unimportant
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (Instruction which helps students learn to get along with other students and adults, prepares students for social and civic responsibility, develops students' awareness and appreciation of our own and other cultures)	O	O	O	O
INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT (Instruction in basic skills in mathematics, reading, and written and verbal communication; and in critical thinking and problem-solving abilities)	O	O	O	O
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT (Instruction which builds self-confidence, creativity, ability to think independently, and self-discipline)	O	O	O	O
VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (Instruction which prepares students for employment, development of skills necessary for getting a job, development of awareness about career choices and alternatives)	O	O	O	O

Functions of Schooling: Your View

Regardless of how you answered the previous questions, how important do YOU THINK each of these areas should be at this school?

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Unimportant	Very Unimportant
Social development	O	O	O	O
Intellectual development	O	O	O	O
Personal development	O	O	O	O
Vocational development	O	O	O	O

School Evaluation

Students are often given the grades A,B,C,D, and FAIL to describe the quality of their work. If schools could be graded in the same way, what grade would you give this school?..... ○ A ○ B ○ C ○ D ○ FAIL

School Problems

Below is a list of things that could be problems at any school. To what extent do you think each is a problems at this school?.....

	Not a Problem	Minor Problem	Major Problem
1. Student misbehavior	○	○	○
2. Poor curriculum	○	○	○
3. Prejudice/Racial conflict	○	○	○
4. Drug/Alcohol use	○	○	○
5. Poor teachers or teaching	○	○	○
6. School too large/Classes overcrowded	○	○	○
7. Teachers don't discipline students	○	○	○
8. Inadequate resources (such as personnel, buildings, equipment, and materials)			
9. The administration at this school			

School Issues

The following statements are about current issues in education. For each one, please mark how much you agree or disagree with what is said.....

	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. What my child is learning in school is useful for what he/she needs to know NOW	○	○	○	○
2. What my child is learning in school will be useful for what he/she will need to know LATER in life	○	○	○	○
3. Schools should be desegregated	○	○	○	○
4. Students should be bused to achieve desegregation	○	○	○	○
5. I would allow my child to be bused to achieve desegregation	○	○	○	○
6. The teaching staff in all schools should be desegregated	○	○	○	○
7. Girls get a better education than boys at this school	○	○	○	○
8. Boys get a better education than girls at this school	○	○	○	○
9. Students of all races get an equally good education at this school	○	○	○	○

10. Many students at this school don't care about learning.....

11. Average students don't get enough attention at this school.....

12. Too many students are allowed to graduate from this school without learning very much.....

13. High school students should have job experience as part of their school program.....

14. There are other places in this community where students could be taught, but this school does not make use of them.....

15. My child is sometimes afraid of being beat up at school.....

16. High schools should provide smoking areas for students.....

17. It would be all right with me to allow prayers in this school.....

18. Physical punishment for discipline purposes should be allowed in this school.....

19. I am satisfied with the counseling service at this school.....

20. I would prefer to have my child in a private rather than a public shool.....

Appendix B

Control Variable Distributions
and Categorization

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Categorization
Schooling Level			
Senior High	1962	42.5	as is
Junior High	2659	57.5	
School Location			
Urban	1530	33.1	
Suburban	2343	50.7	as is
Rural	748	16.2	
Yearly Family Income			
Less than $5,000	398	9.0	Less than $10,000
$5,000 - 9,999	550	12.4	
$10,000 - 14,999	932	21.0	$10,000 - 19,999
$15,000 - 19,999	945	21.3	
$20,000 - 24,999	692	15.6	$20,000 or more
$25,000 or more	923	20.8	
Race/Ethnicity			
White	3236	74.7	
Black	672	15.5	as is
Brown	424	9.8	
Parent Age			
Under 21	26	0.6	39 or less
21 - 29	52	1.1	
30 - 39	1822	39.9	
40 - 49	1971	43.2	40 - 49
50 - 59	618	13.5	50 or more
60 - 69	60	1.3	
70 or over	17	0.4	
Parent Educational Attainment			
Completed 8th grade or less	373	8.3	No high school diploma
Had some high school	598	13.4	
Completed high school	1427	31.9	High school graduate
Completed technical/trade/business school	294	6.6	Some college
Had some college	777	17.4	
Graduated from junior college	172	3.8	College graduate
Graduated from 4-yr. college/university	492	11.0	
Completed post-grad/professional degree	339	7.6	
Parent Political Orientation			
Strongly conservative	273	6.1	Conservative
Conservative	1221	27.3	
Moderate	2245	50.2	Moderate
Liberal	623	13.9	Liberal
Strongly liberal	109	2.4	
Parent Knowledge of School			
A great deal	1208	26.5	
A moderate amount	2789	61.2	as is
Very little	563	12.3	
Same/Different Sex Parent-Child Pairs			
Father-son	540	12.6	
Mother-daughter	1673	39.1	as is
Father-daughter	478	11.2	
Mother-son	1584	37.1	